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Social Science Research Council of
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The continuing neglect of the
social sciences deplored

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THE CONTINUING NEGLECT OF

THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

DEPLORED



A Brief

Submitted by

The Social Science Research Council of Canada

to

The Senate Special Committee on Science Policy

March 4, 1976

BRIEF SUBMITTED TO THE SENATE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE POLICY
BY THE SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH COUNCIL OF CANADA, MARCH 4, 1976

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A. INTRODUCTION

1. The SSRCC welcomes the continued concern of the Senate Special Committee on Science Policy with the issues raised in its report and the subsequent developments in science policy in Canada. A product of the optimistic, expansive sixties, the Committee's Report did not anticipate the severe retrenchment which science policy and scientific expenditures would suffer in the seventies, at least so far and for the foreseeable future.
2. In the light of these developments, the Committee's recommendations on priorities in the science and technology fields become even more pertinent and urgent. Obviously, the implementation of these priorities will now require harder decisions than were anticipated in the Committee's report.
3. In this short brief, the Council will confine itself to the second area of the Committee's intended "watchdog role," that of "a systematic review of the recommendations contained in the Committee's report on science policy." Only a few recommendations of most immediate concern to the Council will be commented upon.
4. The Council considers the other two terms of reference of the Committee also of importance but is unable to comment in detail at this time. A few comments on some relevant recommendations, however, do touch upon these issues.
5. The Council's main concern is with the fact that there is no evidence of any action to correct the serious neglect of the social sciences noted by the Committee in its Report, in spite of its forceful recommendations of emergency action to achieve rapid progress in redressing this imbalance.



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B. RECOMMENDATION 16

6. "at least during the 1970's the order of priority in government support for curiosity-oriented basic research should be, first, the social sciences and the humanities, and second, the life sciences, mainly those related to human health, provided of course that international standards of excellence can be developed and achieved in these areas."
7. This recommendation was based on a review of evidence which should be repeated here:

"The poor conditions of the social sciences in Canada have been deplored on several occasions, more consistently than any other part of the Canadian R&D effort. They have been emphasized by the Massey Commission, the Glassco Commission, the Bladen Report on Financing Higher Education in Canada published in 1957, the Science Council, the Economic Council, and the Macdonald report on The Role of the Federal Government in Support of Research in Canadian Universities. Similar views were expressed by many groups that appeared before the Committee, including the National Research Council. The neglect has been particularly evident in the sector of basic research, which is just the reverse of the situation in the physical sciences (Vol. 2, p. 458)."

8. The Committee suggested that "the situation of the social sciences and humanities should be treated as an emergency," at least for the 1970s, in order to achieve "rapid progress" (p. 461). This was necessary, it maintained, for both "curiosity-oriented" and "mission-oriented" basic research (pp. 461-465).
9. Since the publication of the Senate Committee Report, reasonably good statistics on federal scientific activities have become available in publications of the findings of an annual survey of federal departments and agencies carried out by Statistics Canada. In order to determine what has happened to this recommendation of the Committee, we can examine the trend of federal expenditures based on the five-year period, 1971-1976.* See Table 1, pp. 6-7, for a summary of the relevant statistics.
10. Human science scientific activities have received a modestly increased share of the federal science dollar, from 17.9 per cent in 1971-72 to 23.2 per cent in 1975-76.

* The sources of the following data are: "Federal government expenditures in the natural and human sciences, 1973-74 to 1975-76." Report No. 100 of the Research and Information Services of the Ministry of State for Science and Technology; and Federal Scientific Resources, 1972 to 1974, Natural and Human Sciences, Ministry of State for Science and Technology, December 1973. Both reports utilized the Statistics Canada survey data. Figures for 1976 do not reflect budget cuts imposed after June 1, 1975.

11. Human science research and development has also received a larger share of the federal research and development dollar, from 7.7 per cent in 1971-72 to 12.1 per cent in 1975-76. Moreover, a larger proportion of the federal human science dollar has been allocated to research and development, up from 27.8 per cent in 1971-72 to 34.0 per cent in 1975-76.
12. Although the proportion of the federal research and development dollar going to extramural performers has declined (from 44.7 per cent in 1971-72 to 44.1 per cent in 1975-76), the share of the human sciences in the extramural research and development dollar has increased from 8.3 per cent in 1971-72 to 14.8 per cent in 1975-76. Also, a larger proportion of the human science research and development dollar went to extramural research and development, up from 47.9 per cent in 1971-72 to 54.0 per cent in 1975-76.
13. These modest improvements can hardly be described as a "reversal of priorities" reflecting "emergency action" to achieve "rapid progress." In fact, these slight increases do not even reflect an adequate response to increased participation in research and development on the part of social scientists, let alone correcting the deplorable situation existing at the beginning of the period.
14. That this is the case is more clearly evident when we turn to the universities as performers and the Canada Council as a supplier of funds for human science research and development.
15. Human science research and development performed by universities for the federal government has declined from 51.4 per cent of the federal extramural R&D dollar in 1971-72 to 34.7 per cent in 1975-76. It has also declined as a proportion of the federal human science R&D dollar from 24.7 per cent in 1971-72 to 18.8 per cent in 1975-76. *Hence the universities have not maintained their relative role as performers of federal extramural R&D in the human sciences and have not benefitted from the slight improvements noted above.*
16. The same observations apply for the Canada Council. Its share of the human science R&D dollar has gone down from 12.3 per cent in 1971-72 to 10.4 per cent in 1975-76, and its share of the extramural R&D dollar in the human sciences has gone down from 25.7 per cent in 1971-72 to 19.2 per cent in 1975-76.

17. The Canada Council has always been the major source of research dollars for the universities and has rarely supported research outside the universities. The two trends noted in paragraphs 15 and 16 are therefore related, resulting in an even greater dependence of the universities on the Canada Council: in 1971-72 the Council supplied 50 per cent of the universities' share of federal research and development dollars; by 1975-76 this proportion was 55.3 per cent.
18. A comparison of the Canada Council with the other two granting councils shows that its relative position remained unchanged. At the end of the five-year period, Canada Council's share of the federal science dollar going to the three granting councils for extramural scientific activities was still exactly the same: 14.6 per cent.
19. However, the Canada Council's share of the extramural research and development dollars spent by the three councils increased somewhat from 5.9 per cent in 1971-72 to 7.9 per cent in 1975-76. In the light of paragraph 18, this was entirely the result of the Council increasing the proportion of the extramural scientific activities dollars allocated to research and development, up from 33.3 per cent in 1971-72 to 46.8 per cent in 1975-76.
20. If the Canada Council is the main supplier of funds for basic research in the humanities and social sciences and if the universities are the main performers of such research, *basic research in the humanities and social sciences is in an even worse condition in 1976 than it was in 1972 when the Senate Committee's recommendations were published.* If, in addition, the annual rate of inflation is taken into account, *the modest overall gains did not even maintain levels of support and the Canada Council and the universities, and hence the community of humanities and social science scholars, have lost more ground relative to other suppliers and performers in the human science field.*
21. In the light of these general conclusions, the fact that the federal government imposed a freeze of the 1976 level of funding for the humanities and social sciences as part of the effort to reduce federal expenditures becomes even more alarming. A situation that has been lamented for decades and to which the Senate Committee drew attention five years ago as requiring emergency action, has not only been allowed to deteriorate even further, but has now been made subject to a substantial cutback.

22. If the social sciences are to contribute fundamental knowledge of the conditions underlying the major social problems and challenges faced by contemporary Canadian society, this deprivation must be reversed by concerted action on the part of the federal government. A government that believes that Canada needs a "new society," that major changes must be achieved in values, attitudes and institutions in a relatively short period of time, can ill afford to neglect the social sciences and humanities any longer. Only fundamental knowledge of Canadian society and culture will enable us to determine whether these changes are indeed required and, if so, under which conditions they can be achieved.
23. *The Council urges the Senate Special Committee to seek the immediate removal of the freeze on research grants to universities, at least for the social sciences and humanities, and to make strong representations to Cabinet that its earlier recommendation with respect to the urgent priority which should be given to fundamental research in the social sciences and humanities be implemented in government science policy.*
24. The Council recognizes that spending cuts are necessary in all areas. But it firmly believes that these cuts should be effected where they would hurt the people and the community least, that they should be and should be seen to be equitable and fair. Without commenting here on other aspects of the federal spending cuts, the Council considers the freezing of research grants in the social sciences and humanities as unfair and indefensible, given the "poor condition" of these fields in Canada, so universally deplored.

TABLE I

A DETAILED COMPARISON OF FEDERAL HUMAN SCIENCE ACTIVITIES, 1972-76

ARA. #		1971-72		1975-76	
		Per Cent	\$'000	Per Cent	\$'000
	A. Total federal budget for Scientific Activities		1041.6		1528.1
	B. Human Science Scientific Activities		186.9		354.0
10	B as percentage of A	17.9		23.2	
	C. Total federal budget for Research and Development		672.5		997.6
	D. Human Science Research and Development		51.9		120.5
11	D as percentage of C	7.7		12.1	
11	D as percentage of B	27.8		34.0	
	C as percentage of A	64.6		65.3	
	E. Total federal budget for extramural R&D		300.9		439.7
	F. Human Science extramural R&D		24.9		65.1
12	F as percentage of D	47.9		54.0	
12	F as percentage of C	8.3		14.8	
12	E as percentage of C	44.7		44.1	
	G. Human Science R&D performed by universities		12.8		22.6
15	G as percentage of F	51.4		34.7	
15	G as percentage of D	24.7		18.8	
	H. Canada Council R&D (extra-mural)		6.4		12.5
16	H as percentage of D	12.3		10.4	
16	H as percentage of F	25.7		19.2	
17	H as percentage of G	50.0		55.3	

Continued...

TABLE I (Continued)

RA. #		1971-72		1975-76	
		Per Cent	\$'000	Per Cent	\$'000
	I. Extramural R&D funded by:				
	NRC		68.2		98.5
	MRC		33.8		46.9
	CC		6.4		12.5
	TOTAL		108.4		157.9
9	CC as percentage of total I.	5.9		7.9	
	I as percentage of C	16.1		15.8	
	I as percentage of E	36.0		35.9	
	J. Extramural Scientific Activities funded by:				
	NRC		76.8		108.3
	MRC		35.6		48.4
	CC		19.2		26.7
	TOTAL		131.6		183.4
18	CC as percentage of total J.	14.6		14.6	
	J as percentage of A	12.6		12.0	
19	I as percentage of J:				
	CC	33.3		46.8	
	MRC	94.9		96.9	
	NRC	88.8		91.0	
	TOTAL	82.4		86.1	
36	K. Intramural human science R&D		27.0		55.4
37	K as percentage of D	52.1		46.0	

C. RECOMMENDATION 6

25. ".....a Canadian Research Board be set up, together with three foundations, to report to the Secretary of State and to be responsible mainly for the development of a capacity for and the support of curiosity-oriented basic research in universities and similar institutions."
26. The SSRCC has responded on the whole positively to the announcement of the federal government's intention to implement part of this recommendation in the proposed reorganization of the granting councils.*
27. The reported postponement of the reorganization until more funds can be made available for university research is an unfortunate step. The Council finds it difficult to accept the argument that there is no money to implement this important and long overdue change in the federal granting structures. Surely no one would argue that funds should be diverted from research programmes to finance the possibly higher costs of the new granting council for the social sciences and humanities. But it is not clear that such an implication would be unavoidable.
28. More importantly, every year of postponement will now leave the professional social sciences and humanities community in limbo. The case for a council consisting predominantly of professionals is a strong one in any field of scientific endeavour. In fields so badly neglected and so much in need of professional guidance and direction in their growth as the social sciences and humanities, it is indispensable and an urgent necessity. These fields require immediate action to identify gaps, priorities in relation to Canadian conditions, and future directions of development in knowledge and manpower.
29. These problems cannot be solved simply by making more money available. In fact, it could be argued that the new council would be better off if it need not launch new programmes and fund new applications immediately. Perhaps the period of relative scarcity of money foreseen for the next couple of years will provide favourable conditions for gaining experience in priority setting and for developing and consolidating the new organization.
30. *We therefore recommend that the necessary resources be allocated to establish the new granting council for the social sciences and humanities without further delay, even if the reorganization of the National Research Council has to be postponed.*

* See "Recommendations of the Social Science Research Council of Canada on the Proposed Granting Council for the Social Sciences and Humanities, 1974" (Appendix A) and "The Legal Status and Independence of the Proposed Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, 1974" (Appendix B).

D. - RECOMMENDATIONS 9 AND 17

31. ".....approximately 10 per cent of the national R&D effort be devoted to basic research by 1980 and that an immediate start be made toward this target."(9)
32. ".....the Minister of State for Science and Technology undertake a detailed review of the basic research activities carried out by all government agencies to see if they are justified and, if so, to consider whether some of them could not be advantageously transferred to universities." (17)
33. To the knowledge of this Council, no effort has been made to implement these important recommendations. As a result, the opposite has happened: the universities have lost ground as performers of federal research and development.
34. Basic or fundamental research in the social sciences and humanities has been grossly neglected to such an extent that their application or the application of available knowledge to current social problems becomes an extremely hazardous undertaking, overshadowed only by a trial-and-error, non-knowledge based approach.
35. In the humanities and social sciences, the proportion of R&D funds directed to basic or fundamental research should be more than the 10 per cent recommended by the Committee if the neglect of basic research in the past is to be corrected and compensated for. This will enable the rapid development of fundamental knowledge of Canadian society to take place to remedy the serious underdevelopment of these fields in the face of greater demands for fundamental social knowledge.
36. It is unclear how much basic research is being done intramurally in the human sciences by government departments. But over the five-year period, federal expenditures on intramural R&D in the human sciences have more than doubled (105.2 per cent increase) whereas the universities' share has increased by only 76.6 per cent.
37. The results of this inhouse research (\$55.4 million in 1976) are seldom published. Its quality and usefulness are unknown quantities. A review such as the Committee recommended is long overdue. It is the Council's view that this research will not compare well with research done in universities, not even in terms of usefulness in application. *The Council would, therefore, recommend that the federal government freeze expenditures on inhouse research, rather than university research, at least until such a review could establish the relative merits of certain types of intramural research in the human sciences.*
38. The Council is well aware that much needs to be done to upgrade the quality of social science research in Canada, in the universities as well as in government and industry. But relatively speaking, the expertise in these fields is concentrated in the universities where the training of future researchers for government and industry also takes place.

E. RECOMMENDATIONS 1, 2, 18 AND FUTURE RESEARCH

39. ".....the Economic Council should enlarge its activities and establish a special Committee on the Future, with broad terms of reference but looking more specifically at the years 2000 and 1985 and attempting to project various possible environments that could emerge from the extrapolation of identifiable Canadian trends within the international context."(1)
40. ".....the Senate sponsor a conference for the purpose of establishing a Commission on the Future whose responsibility would be to help as many private and public organizations as possible to forecast and build their future not only in isolation but together."(2)
41. ".....in the future most basic research activities of the Canadian government be concentrated in a national research academy, with three institutes for the physical sciences, the life sciences, and the social sciences, with the purpose of filling gaps in basic research, especially in the social sciences and the life sciences." (18)
42. The SSRCC recognizes the basic needs for much firmer, better coordinated knowledge of the current state of Canadian society and its antecedents, as well as for a comprehensive approach to its future. These two needs should be met by the same programme, however organized.
43. A firm knowledge of the current state and past patterns and trends is an indispensable condition for any forecasting or forward planning activity. The same systems are required in the maintenance of a data base on the past and projections of the trends into the future. The same skills and techniques are called for. The combination of the two activities in one programme is therefore logically, economically, and practically sound.
44. None of the current agencies referred to in the Report or in the terms of reference of the Senate Committee seem appropriate for this role. There is a gap at the national institutional level that cannot be filled by any of the existing institutions, nor by the academy recommended by the Committee (18).
45. In recent years, the Economic Council, the Science Council, Statistics Canada, as well as other agencies have made efforts to step into the void that exists with respect to both current and future knowledge of Canadian society. None of them is properly equipped to perform this role adequately.

46. The Institute for Research on Public Policy has recently been asked to examine the need for future studies, but it apparently does not see itself performing this role and, at present, does not seem equipped to do so.
47. It is the Council's opinion that the filling of this gap is an urgent national priority. But, like so many other initiatives at the national level in Canada, it will require a complex and pluralistic approach to its planning and establishment if it is to mobilize the scarce human resources in Canada effectively and successfully.
48. *The Council recommends that the Senate Special Committee embark on extensive consultations with researchers in universities, industry and government to determine the best national strategy towards the establishment of the necessary institutional structure to meet Canada's needs for sound knowledge of current trends and for alternative choices to undesirable futures implied in these trends. The Council offers to assist the Committee in consultations with social science researchers in this regard.*

F. VOLUME III, RECOMMENDATION 12

49. ".....the Royal Society of Canada, with the assistance of a special grant from the Ministry of State for Science and Technology, assume the overall responsibility for developing and maintaining relations with foreign private scientific and engineering bodies, operating at the international [or national level], in close co-operation with the International Branch of the Ministry and the specialized scientific and engineering associations existing in Canada."
50. The SSRCC objected strongly to this recommendation in a letter to the Prime Minister dated December 20, 1973 (Appendix C). As in regard to Recommendation 17 below, *it is the view of the Council that representative roles can only be played by properly structured representative organizations such as the SSRCC and HRCC, with some appropriate form of comprehensive coordination for the scientific field as a whole where necessary.* The Royal Society is ill equipped to act as a representative of Canadian social scientists and humanists, nationally or internationally.

G. VOLUME III, RECOMMENDATION 17 (1), (2), (3), (4).

51. ".....the Ministry of State for Science and Technology be mainly responsible for defining and coordinating the Canadian government's relations with private scientific and engineering societies, that the present activities carried out by NRC, the Canada Council, and similar agencies in the area of relations with such private bodies at the national and international level be phased out and that the funds allocated by these government agencies for this purpose be transferred to MOSST;(1)
52.the Ministry formally recognize the Royal Society of Canada and the Association of the Scientific, Engineering and Technological Community of Canada (SCITEC) as the two main spokesmen of the Canadian scientific and engineering community in the areas of science for policy and policy for science respectively;(2)
53.the new 'make-or-buy' policy be applied in these two areas by all government departments and agencies, especially by MOSST and the Science Council, and that studies they require on these two topics be contracted out whenever desirable to the Royal Society and SCITEC;(3)
54.the Ministry of State for Science and Technology make an adequate, annual, unconditional grant to these two national bodies -- the amount to be determined after consultation with them -- for the purpose of enabling them to maintain an efficient secretariat, to undertake a few studies on their own initiative, to hold periodic symposia, and to finance their publications."(4)
55. *The Social Science Research Council would strongly advise against these recommendations and has done so before. It is encouraging to note that none of these have been implemented and it is hoped that the Senate Committee will not attempt to resurrect them.*
56. The SSRCC does not recognize any other non-governmental scientific association as a spokesman on social science for policy or policy for social science. Neither The Royal Society nor SCITEC, of which SSRCC is a member, is equipped to fulfill this role; nor does SCITEC currently aspire to this role.

56. Continued....

The SSRCC, on the other hand, has demonstrated repeatedly that it has the capacity and is recognized, to act as spokesman of the Canadian social science community in *both* respects.*

57. Consequently, *it is the view of the Council that recommendations 17(3) and 17(4) should be implemented with respect to itself, the HRCC and other umbrella organizations in other scientific fields.* In cases where cooperation and coordination among these fields are required, SCITEC may be able to provide the necessary channels.

* See "National Social Science Conference on Social Science and Public Policy in Canada, Programme, 1975," and Social Sciences in Canada, Vol. 4, #1, Special Issue, 1976 (Appendix D); Canadian Public Land Use in Perspective, 1974 (Appendix E); Problems of Social Science Research at Smaller Canadian Universities, 1975 (Appendix F); "Final Report of the Enquiry into the Support of Scholarly Publication by the Social Science Research Council of Canada and the Humanities Research Council of Canada, 1975" (Appendix G); "The Social Sciences and Science Policy - The Response of the Social Science Research Council of Canada to A Science Policy for Canada, Report of the Senate Special Committee on Science Policy, Volume 2: Targets and Strategies for the Seventies, 1972" (Appendix H); "Social Science Organization and Government: Response of the SSRCC's Committee on Policy and Finance to A Science Policy for Canada, Vol. 3: "A Government Organization for the Seventies, 1974" (Appendix I); "Brief Submitted to the AUCC Commission to Study the Rationalization of University Research, by the Policy and Finance Committee of the Social Science Research Council of Canada, 1972" (Appendix J); "Social Science Research Policy and the Universities - A Commentary by the Social Science Research Council of Canada on Quest for the Optimum: Research Policy in the Universities of Canada, The Report of a Commission to Study the Rationalization of University Research, by L.-P. Bonneau and J.A. Corry, Ottawa, AUCC, 1972" (Appendix K); "Brief Submitted by the Social Science Research Council of Canada to the Commission on Canadian Studies, 1973" (Appendix L).



